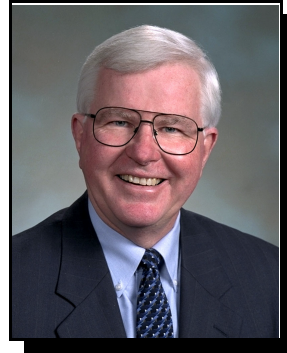


From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt

Spring 2002



Dear Neighbor:

My first term in the Legislature — what a way to start! The recession, the earthquake, the energy crisis — as well as the 49-49 tie last year followed by the very slim majority this year. It certainly has been a unique, challenging and — yes — rewarding experience.

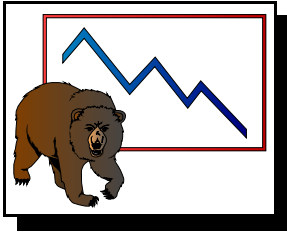
I received additional duties as vice chair of the Agriculture & Ecology Committee, and also serve on the Capital Budget, and the Technology, Telecommunications & Energy committees. Each panel meets at least twice a week during session, and the meetings are divided into five- to 15-minute segments for people to explain their issues. The wave of information pumped at us creates what I call “drinking from the fire hose.” One person appeals for education, another for farm-relief, another for decent salaries for state workers — the list is just about endless. Most every citizen who comes before a committee has written materials for us, too. Each issue is important, so it’s imperative to absorb and respect all the details. Still, I truly feel as if I’m standing in front of a fire hose deluging me with information!

Best wishes — *and thank you for your time reviewing my report today,*

Sam Hunt
State Representative
22nd Legislative District

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From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt
Spring 2002



✓ **Budgets:**

Lack of a COLA for Washington's state employees is very disappointing

Under the circumstances, I know that the revised operating budget could be worse. No, this new budget isn't the most terrible thing that could happen to thousands of our state's hardest working people — the men and women who work *for* our state. But that doesn't make me feel much better. It's very disappointing that the Senate prevailed with its demand that the new budget reject a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for state employees.

We did agree on approximately \$680 million in cuts to help address a budget-revenue canyon of \$1.5 billion. We did it on time, and without any increase in general taxes. Also to help bridge the budget gap: Many vacant state-employee positions will remain unfilled, part of our emergency reserve is tapped, and we'll use 20 percent of the tobacco-settlement funds.

Money is provided to cover citizen-initiatives, however, and this new budget obeys our state-constitutional responsibility to provide a basic education for every youngster. I know the term "basic education" is defined differently by different people. My point is simply to note that this new operating budget — in the face of Washington's most severe recession in two decades — maintains our commitment to several hundred thousand schoolkids. There are program-cuts in K-12 and higher education, however, and inflation isn't covered. Higher education will see sizable tuition-increases, and most college and university staff will not receive a cost-of-living adjustment.

***Our Thurston County region
also has a lot at stake in the capital budget***

We also approved a new capital budget primarily aimed at getting unemployed Washington citizens back to work — and meeting urgent state-construction needs.

The statewide projects in this capital budget are an economic-stimulus package. More than ever, we must pursue high-quality economic development both to stimulate growth and to retain good jobs. The statewide portion of this legislation includes money for local jails, salmon-recovery, and water-pollution control. The budget will create jobs for thousands of workers.

From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt
Spring 2002

A specific Thurston County project receiving funding help in the new capital budget includes repair of earthquake damage on Deschutes Parkway so we can get the road open by this fall. Additional local projects include more work on Capitol Campus parking, a new Pleasant Glade Park, and infrastructure-improvement at The Evergreen State College.



✓ **Collective bargaining:**
*Civil-service reform, at long last,
is a fair and meaningful law of our state*

Fairness and efficiency finally got a word in edgewise in the Legislature.

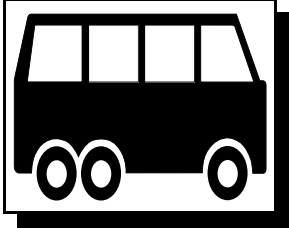
We approved fair and meaningful civil-service-reform legislation this session! Although the idea had spent years on the front burner, it hadn't made its way through the process until this year. I have always believed that civil-service reform is a great and needed step toward balance *and efficiency* in state government. The new law expands collective-bargaining for state employees — and civil-service-job categories are streamlined from 2,700 down to less than 15 categories. I don't see how anyone can help but see this change as a reasonable answer to the demand for more efficiency in the delivery of public services and programs.

For the first time, front-line state employees will have a seat at the table where decisions about their lives are made. State employees will have meaningful involvement in determining the best ways to provide vital services for the people of Washington. Terms of the new law broaden collective-bargaining rights to cover a state employee's wages, hours, and additional terms of employment. Further, mediation and fact-finding can be used to address any disagreements that do come up. This provision is included both to make sure the decision-making process is fair for state employees and to make sure nothing gets in the way of service for citizens.

More than 20 other states and many local governments here in Washington have already established the collective-bargaining system called for in this year's successful measure. Other governments recognize — as we now, finally, recognize in our own Washington state government — that men and women doing a public job certainly have good ideas for doing their job even better. Much of the private sector has had collective bargaining for years.

State employees now have fundamental rights that most other employees have long taken for granted.

From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt
Spring 2002



✓ **Transportation:**

*Unclogging our highways starts
with emphasizing our accountability*

The first big bill we passed and sent to the governor this year highlights efficiency and accountability in our state's transportation system. Quickly signed into law, the legislation underscores a long-standing need to improve our infrastructure.

In this bill, we adopt important recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation. The citizens and businesspeople who served on the commission invested two years searching for ways to move our roads, bridges, ferries, transit systems, and other parts of the infrastructure into the 21st century. This first measure, for another thing, authorizes more contracting-out as a way to renew our emphasis on stronger partnership with private enterprise.

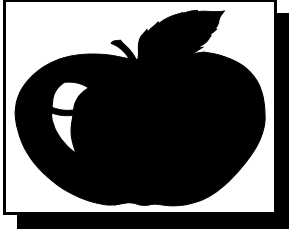
Figuring out just the right funding plan was certainly the toughest target to hit in the transportation package we sought this legislative session. Many of us felt that transportation questions must be answered *now* because they'll only get thornier — and costlier — the longer we put it off. After years of discussion, a majority of legislators finally embraced a 10-year, \$7.7 billion statewide proposal.

The idea is to improve highway safety and efficiency. A nine-cent increase in the state gas tax — five cents starting next January and four cents the following year — would produce most of the revenue. A 30-percent increase in the gross truck-weight fee — half next January and half the following year — and a one-percent sales-tax increase on vehicles starting next January would generate the rest of the income.

I voted to have the Legislature approve the package here in Olympia without a referendum clause to put it on the ballot in this November's election. Legislators are elected to make tough decisions — and making this one *in the Legislature* would have allowed us to start work this summer. Still, I ultimately supported a referendum clause. The proverbial bottom line? We've simply got to start overhauling our transportation infrastructure.

A public decision on the transportation plan will be made in the November election.

From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt
Spring 2002



✓ **State products:**

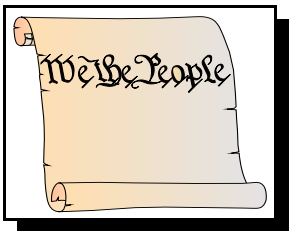
*I'm convinced this is a good idea
for boosting Washington's No. 1 industry*

Question: Should we encourage government agencies to buy goods and products from Washington farmers?

Answer: You're darned right we should!

That's why I introduced a bill urging public offices and departments to "shop locally" — whenever it's reasonably possible. This successful legislation says the Department of General Administration and the Department of Agriculture must work together — and with other agencies — to increase support for our farm families. Let's not forget that these families constitute *Washington's No. 1 industry*.

It just makes sense that Washington's state government — and local governments, too — should be a top customer for Washington's farmers and ranchers. This is a fair and local focus on helping farmers — especially the smaller farming operations that rely on domestic markets for a huge part of their business. I agree that we should support the large farms, too — don't get me wrong. It's just that I believe this new policy is an excellent and specific way to support smaller farming operations.



✓ **Additional issues:**

*We'll keep on working to put
an end to a very serious toxic threat*

Mercury — just a small, almost undetectable amount of it — can be harmful and even deadly to humans and wildlife. We'd better find ways to reduce its use, and safely dispose of mercury and mercury products.

And the mercury-question isn't "Where do you find this stuff?" but rather "Where don't you find it?" I sponsored the House of Representatives version of a plan to cut back — and eventually cut out — the sale of as many products containing mercury as possible. The bill didn't make it through the process this year, but I'll keep working on it in the 2003 session.

From the desk of
Representative Sam Hunt
Spring 2002

Mercury poses serious risks to children's health — and to our overall environment. This legislation is another common-sense proposal reflecting what many other states are already doing to safeguard the health of their citizens. Our legislation would forbid disposal of products that include mercury — unless the product is treated as a hazardous waste or recycled safely.

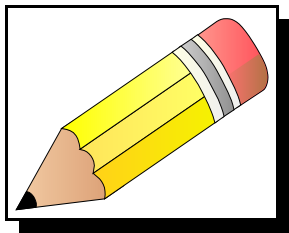
Organizations including the Institute for Children's Environmental Health, the People for Puget Sound, the Steel Recycling Institute, and the Washington Toxics Coalition back the bill.

***Senate sacks my legislation
aimed at sending NFL blackouts to the showers***

I sponsored a bill to free football fans from the National Football League's sell-out embargo that prevents us from watching our home team on local TV unless they fill the seats.

As I sat in a half-full Husky Stadium a few months ago and watched the Seahawks beat Kansas City, the unfairness of the blackout policy became obvious. After all, taxpayers are helping pay the bill for the new stadium. We should be able to see a home game on local TV if we can't afford to go — or if we choose not to go for some other reason. People in nursing homes and hospitals, for instance, can't attend. Men, women and kids who have physical challenges, too, and a lot of senior citizens who can't make it out to the stadium are often deprived of watching a TV game played in our publicly funded stadium. That's just wrong — the games shouldn't be limited to folks with money and time to attend. When the NFL calls, it shouldn't be collect!

The measure drove through the House of Representatives — only to stall in the Senate.



✓ **Citizen participation:**
*Please get in touch whenever you
have any comments you'd like to share!*

Your comments are always helpful. Please don't hesitate to call, write, e-mail, or do whatever it takes to stay in touch with me. Meagan Brown, my legislative assistant, and I look forward to hearing from you!

I hope you find this information useful. With mailing restrictions and a tight state budget, I haven't distributed regular newsletters. In view of decisions we made in the Legislature this year, however, I believe it's appropriate to provide this more personal letter.